

REMARKS

In the Office Action dated January 11, 2008, claims 1-22 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Chang et al U.S. 2003/0032352A1. The Examiner made the rejection final. In response, applicant submits a Request for Continuing Examination, together with a Declaration of Glenn C. Calhoun, one of the joint inventors of the subject matter of the present patent application, as well as the following remarks. Accordingly, applicant requests reconsideration of the present patent application.

In the Office Action, claims 1-22 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Chang et al U.S. 2003/0032352A1. The Examiner states that the step of recycling acetone would be obvious because, although Chang et al does not disclose a solvent recycling step, a polymer chemist of ordinary skill in the art would be motivated to modify Chang et al by recycling the previously-removed acetone because the recycling of acetone and the addition of water (steps E and F in claim 1) are merely an optimization of the process as a whole. In particular, the Examiner states that "the applicant must provide data reveal [sic] the unexpected results of completing steps E and F."

Accordingly, applicant submits a Declaration of Glenn C. Calhoun, one of the joint inventors of the subject matter of the present invention herewith. The Examiner should note that the Declaration accompanying this response is unsigned. However, applicant will file an executed Declaration as soon as possible.

In the Declaration, the Examiner will note that the inventor Calhoun performed an experiment to produce the desired product by the method described in Chang et al. As the Examiner can see, the process described in Chang et al is not practical for a typical batch reaction, particularly one on a commercial scale. As the inventor Calhoun concludes, all of the solvent cannot be removed because of the high viscosity of the polymer material which reduces the amount of solvent that can be distilled from the product and recycled. In contrast, the addition of water to the polymer solution in the process of the present patent application allows the product to maintain a low viscosity throughout the process and to recover enough acetone rich distillate to run the next batch without additional purification steps. These steps make the process commercially practical.

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Reply to Office Action of January 11, 2008

As noted in the response of October 23, 2007, claim 1 requires adding water to the reaction mixture after polymerization, removing the acetone from the reaction mixture after adding the water, and finally using the acetone that has been removed to prepare the solvent solution of step A. These limitations distinguish claim 1 from Chang et al because Chang et al teaches neither (1) adding water after polymerization and before removing the solvent, nor (2) recycling the acetone to prepare the mixed solvent solution for polymerizing the polymer.

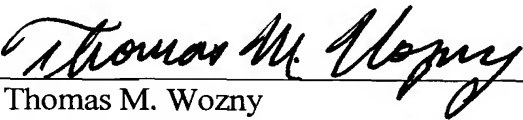
Applicant would like to once again refer the Examiner to the arguments made on pages 7 and 8 of the previous response dated October 23, 2007. Applicant would like to incorporate those arguments by reference specifically into this response, and requests the Examiner once again review those arguments when reconsidering this application.

In summary, not only is there no suggestion or motivation in Chang et al to modify the Chang et al reference to add water and recycle the solvent, but there is no reasonable expectation of success, since the starting distillate is substantially different from the polymerization solvent in the present process. Finally, the prior art Chang et al reference clearly does not teach or suggest such steps, and as a result, applicant believes claims 1-22 and 24 are not obvious in view of Chang et al.

An effort has been made to place this application in a condition for allowance and such action is earnestly requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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